IDYLLS OF CHAMPLAIN

ELLA WARNER FISHER

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IDYLLS
FROM
CHAMPLAIN

BY
ELLA WARNER FISHER

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LeRoy Phillips

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LOVINGLY INSCRIBED
TO
MY MOTHER

602054

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THE VALLEY WAY

THERE are bards who soar on pinions light
'Mong satellites and stars,
Their songs with rapture thrill the night
In quivering beauty bars.
They bring before our enchanted gaze
Elysian fields so rare
We dream of Heaven. 'Twould be no amaze
To wake and find us there.

I may not descend into the deeps
Or soar above the heights;
I may not walk the rugged steeps
Or indulge in aërial flights,
But I can travel the beaten road
Along the Valley Way;
I can chant some humble ode
For the folks of every day.

There may be those with a willing ear,
Who carry a heavy load.
Perhaps some sorrowing soul will hear
Along the Valley road.
While other bards soar far and high,
I will take the Valley Way;
My song may reach the hearts close by
'Mong the folks of every day.

MOTHER DEAR

Afar away
Some forgotten thread
In the dim past,
Do your remember, Mother dear?
The garments that we made?
The winding of the baste
Upon a spool
In the hour after school,
As we sat, you and I,
In that old familiar room
On a winter afternoon
So far away.

The evening fell,
Do you remember, Mother dear?
How those quiet evenings fell,
Enlivened by the readings
While our patchwork grew,
And on the children's stockings
Our knitting needles flew?
Oft the storm without was raging,
But the fire was burning brightly,
Where we sat those hours together
In that cosy, well loved room
So far away.

The summer came,
And a soft breeze stirred the curtains
At the open window hung.
From the doorway's ample vista
We could see the waving cornfields
And the clover bloom came floating
From the meadows
Where the scythes were being swung,
In those happy, hazy days
So far away.

Do you remember
We brought the table in,
You and I, Mother dear?
And the tempting dinner spread
With its ample dishes filled,
Hungry men to satisfy?
While they ate with eager zest,
From the fair and teeming fields
The summer fragrance floated in,
To that old and cherished room
So far away.

Long and silent
Are the many years between,
And the scythes no more are swinging
In the meadows sweet with bloom.
Come the men no more at noonday
From their washing at the bench,

To the spreading of the table
In that flower laden room,
For no backward tide is rolling
Save the memories sad and sweet,
And those days are gone forever,
As a volume that is finished
And complete.

The Reader sleeps.
On his grave the grass is waving,
Even now your hair is white —
Is it evening, Mother dear?
Do others keep the fires burning,
Where we used to sit together
With the quiet and the peace,
Sheltered from the wind and weather,
In that memory laden room
So far away?

LOVELY CHAMPLAIN

Faint are the traces
O, lovely Champlain,
Of the limits that bound you
In the dim silent past.
On the rocks of your basin
The records were cast
Ere the finger of man
Was created to write.
When your waters were gathering
From forces unseen,
And filling the hollows
The mountains between,
By giant upheavals
Your tides were confined,
Ere the sun of the morning
Arose on your face.

Changing your moods
O, lovely Champlain,
The wide blue above you
Where scudding clouds sweep;
The craft that sail o'er you
While unruffled you sleep;
The water fowl swooping
With bright wings outspread;
The age serried cliffs
And the steep verdured hills,

In faithful reflection
Your still deeps have caught,
All spread in a painting
Of imagery rare.

Changeful your moods,
O, lovely Champlain,
One touch of the wind
You are moving again,
Your waters aripple
All studded with light,
Like fine sheeted silver
Agleam in the sun.
Your murmuring plaint
Calling soft to the shore
In lullabys luring
To dreams and to sleep,
All down the long valley
Where your bright waters sweep.

Grand is your wrath,
O, wondrous Champlain,
When the fierce winds sweep o'er you
From the mountains' steep crown,
Your loud angry waters
In foam crested swells,
Come breaking to shoreward
Where the lines of white driftwood
And the smooth pebbles lie,

Or where rocky confines
Rise defiant and grim,
And the wild eagle guards
Her brood from the storm.

But useless your fury,
O, angry Champlain,
You cannot be free
Though the boom of your anger
Resound like the sea.
Staunch cedars and pines
Stand fast on the beach,
Their voices in harmony
And sympathy blend,
Unheard is their calling
While the storm winds sweep on —
The play of the lightning
And the thunder's deep roll,
Seem but the echo
Of your own surging soul.

VERGENNES

THERE's a beautiful valley along Champlain,
A sunlit vale of dreams,
Where Nature trails her garments fair
To the lilt of purling streams.
Adown the valley a river deep
Threading its swift and winding way,
Leaps over the boulders wild and steep,
In a tumult of foaming spray.

And ever the mists above it rise,
As in pristine days of old,
And the western sunlight filtering through
Turns it to cloth of gold.
The lure of its call drew Nature's child,
The swift footed Red Man, here;
As through the tangle of forest wild
He chased the fleeing deer.

The White Man heard its murmuring call,
And his axe resounding rang,
The forest blossomed about the Fall
And the forge of the smithy sang.
A city he built on the hillsides there
And the hollows that lie between;
A spot endowed by Nature rare
Along the river's bright sheen.

The city still stands about the Fall,
Its founders have passed away,
And many have heard the luring call
Since that dim and distant day.
There are grander cities beneath the skies,
But none that are half so dear,
Where shrouding mists o'er the waters rise
And beckoning wraiths appear.

ON MANSFIELD

To the North from the din of the City,
The Monarch of Mansfield lies,
The scars of the centuries seam his face,
Raised high in the gleaming skies;
Huge masses of rock rise defiant;
Their outlines forbidding and wild,
And the winds sweep free and unbroken
Over Solitude's favorite child.

The lovers of Nature have found him,
The flaws in his armor they know,
The rare mosses fed by cool waters,
On their way to the valley below;
The nooks in the sweet swaying balsams,
The caves in his dark stony side,
The lake that he hid in his bosom,
The paths that to man he denied.

The lovers of Nature have found him,
From out of the east and the west,
Over boulders and brake and tangle
They come from valley to crest,
They watch the red sunset at even,
The glory of sunrise they know,
The glimpses of cloudland and Heaven,
And the silent world below.

IN ALLEN'S BAY

O LIMPID sparkling water,
All shimmering in the Bay!
Still rippling on the stony beach
As it did that distant day,
When here we raised our tent
Ere fell the eventide,
And the little woodland dwellers
To hidden nests had hied.

The fragrant pine and cedar
With boughs all interlaced,
For us a sheltering canopy
By lavish Nature placed.
'Twas here our rude board table
In jest and laughter laid,
Was circled by dear old faces —
May their memory never fade.

Right here's the very crevice
Where we piled the rocks up higher,
And hung our steaming kettle
Above a crackling fire.
Our bonfires cleft the darkness
When summer nights were warm,
And here our boats lay rocking
In sunshine and in storm.

The faces gay and smiling,
 Who'll smile at us no more —
We seem to see them once again
 Along this dear old shore;
Some are gone away forever,
 In quiet graves they lie,
And some in countries far
 For home in vain may sigh.

Reverently we are standing
 With sweet memories all around,
And softly they remind us
 That this is hallowed ground.
The twilight shades are falling —
 The close of a radiant day;
But voices still are calling
 To us in Allen's Bay.

OUR LAST RIDE

It was a country road that wound away
In long white stretches that summer day,
Nature lay locked in a calm so dead,
Not the stir of a leaf in the trees overhead.

With hanging head in the sultry heat
The horse went on with reluctant feet,
The wheels rolled slowly in deep white sand,
And an old man drove with trembling hand.
His hair was bleached with the passing years,
And his gaze intent, as one who hears
Some far off call with tightening dread
While life yet dear, holds by a thread.

And so we journeyed that sultry day,
But few we met on the lonely way.
The bridges were swept by recent rain,
And we drove out on the grassy plain,
Over the pebbles of the shallow bed
Where the crystal river noisily sped,
Then we came to a village street —
Fit place for a hermit to retreat,
With silent houses on either side,
And vacant windows open wide.
Doors on broken hinges slack;
Storm-swept clapboards beaten black;
Grass grown yards and empty space,
Threw a strangeness o'er the place.

One house there was, it looked almost new,
Where people lived and flowers grew.

A leaning bridge; a ruined mill,
Its cumbrous wheel forever still;
Swallows circling about their nests
Cobwebs clinging to their breasts.
Bold and fearless within its shade
Bats and owls their homes had made.
A chattering squirrel perched aloft;
A brown wren calling in accents soft;
These and others within its shade
Happy and fearless their homes had made.

Where are they who once dwelt here?
And do their ghosts of nights appear?
Do leaning porch and mildewed walls
Resound to strange sepulchral calls?
And phantom feet o'er sunken floors
Pass in and out the creaking doors?
Just vacant houses and ruined mill,
And silence of nature, O how still!

Then we turned in the grassy street,
And homeward jogged in the sultry heat,
Over long, lone stretches of deep white sand,
And an old man drove with trembling hand.

FARRAGUT AT MOBILE BAY

The enemy's forts a stern front wore
Like sentinel guards on either shore;
Where the turbid waters to seaward sweep,
Destructive missiles lay buried deep.
Defiance blazed from each bristling gun
Of the hostile fleet in the morning sun;
His battering rams awaited the fight,
Sheeted in armor and hidden from sight,
And with bated breath in silence lay
Upon the waters of Mobile Bay.

Admiral Farragut our bright flag bore
On the fifth of August in sixty-four,
From every staff of his ships of war
As they sailed across the harbor bar;
More thrilling sight not often is seen
As they waved and fluttered in starry sheen.
Each burnished deck was cleared for fight
And spotless shone in the morning light,
From gulf to channel in battle array
On the fair false bosom of Mobile Bay.

The brooding silence in echoes awoke,
Over Fort Morgan rolled the angry smoke;
Beneath the waters in a deadly mine
Lay the enemy's hidden torpedo line.
Commander Craven the fray began
With the doomed *Tecumseh* leading the van;

She quivered and poised an instant and then
With her crew of over a hundred men,
In a watery vortex was downward borne,
While loved ones still in the Northland mourn.

Then into the midst of the deadly shelling
Came Admiral Farragut his orders telling,
Far up the rigging, and then lest he
Become the prey of the hungry sea,
Was lashed to the shrouds on the *Hartford's* deck
And sailed above the *Tecumseh's* wreck;
Above the perilous torpedo mine,
Where each missile raked his ships in line,
Then each in turn dropped harmless away
In the troubled waters of Mobile Bay.

As to right and left his brave ships fought,
Out of confusion good order he wrought;
To right and left rose the battle smoke
And far inland the booming broke;
Earth with bolted thunder was riven
When an angel left her place in Heaven;
No mortal saw the wings she spread
Over the daring Admiral's head,
But unscathed he came through the dreadful fray
On the wreck strewn waters of Mobile Bay.

Each fort was silenced; each bristling gun
That burnished shone in the morning sun,
Smirched and blackened at eve hung stilled,
And moans of the wounded the night air filled;
Dead men lay where the living had been,
And a brooding hush fell soft on the din.
Peace is bought at the price of war,
And it settled over the harbor bar,
When Farragut, Heaven protected that day,
Won the battle of Mobile Bay.

THE CHURCH IN THE VALLEY

THERE's a moss grown church in the valley,
And ivy climbs over the wall;
The tall grass grows over the threshold
Where the silent night dews fall.
The old bell lies there in the turret,
And its musical chiming is still,
Once it awoke the glad echoes
Through valley and towering hill.

Where is the rosy cheeked maiden
And where is the wrinkled dame,
Who every Sabbath morning
From over the meadows came?
And where is the grey haired sexton
Who stood on the belfry stair,
And rang the old bell in the turret
While the worshippers gathered there?

Go out in the silent church yard,
For there they are all laid low,
And there is the white-haired preacher
Of fifty years ago.
And there is the good old deacon,
Who sat by the chancel rail
And prayed the Lord to gather the grain
And burn up the wayward kale.

There are grand churches in the City;
The City that rose in a day,
And the old stone church in the valley
Is now but a ruin grey.
And the simple village people,
As they pass on the other side,
Will warn you in awe-struck whisper
To give it a margin wide.

As you stand in the gathering shadows
And list to each sound that you hear,
There's something indefinite stealing,
And fancy is morbid with fear;
The wind rustles vague through the ivy
And over the tombstones bare,
And the spirit of buried ages
Seems keeping you company there.

You look for the white-haired preacher
With text book in his hand,
And the rush of a night bird past you
Seems a guest from another land.
The rats in the belfry daze you,
And you go with quickened tread
And leave the old church in the valley
Alone with its slumbering dead.

RELICS

THERE's a nameless charm about them
The things of bygone days,
They are quaint and strangely fashioned,
Nor fit our modern ways.
We touch them with reverent fingers,
And our fond thought o'er them lingers,
And the ones who loved them so
Long ago.

There's a mystic charm about them,
The relics of days of yore,
But we shall do without them,
As those who have gone before.
When we are gone will some one care,
Or a thought on these old relics spare,
And wonder why we loved them so
Long ago?

IN THE BORDERLAND

I HAVE been in the house
Of my childhood to-day,
Exploring the rooms
Where I used to play.
The sunrise glinted pellucid gold
Through its eastern windows
And its doorway old,
Under the slant of its lowly eaves,
Where nest of the homing swallow cleaves,
I passed again, as once I passed
When the posts were straight
And the sills were fast,
Into the silent kitchen door.

And again I saw
The great dim fireplace,
The old oak floor,
The roomy pantry, dismantled and bare,
Once big and exhaustless,
With dainties to spare;
The little bedroom that used to be mine
Sunken and mildewed
And silent as time —
Once draped with red peonies
And asparagus plumes,
Its broken paned window
The sunshine illumes.

On into the parlor, my Grandmother's room,
Where shades of green made a semi-gloom.

And I saw again
Its wide open fireplace
And andirons bright,
Where the fire leaped high
On a wintry night;

The flawless spare bedroom
With its fourposter staid,
Where Grandmother's star quilt
All spotless was laid.
I looked up the stairway,
Began its ascent,
It tottered and creaked
As upward I went.

To the dear old chamber
With its dormer window
Looking out on the East —

With a chair I oft climbed
To a seat on the sill;
Its outlook and quiet
My need seemed to fill.

Unmolested the birds
Had builded their nests,
The riot of sunrise
Lay bright on their breasts;

They fluttered and flew
In frightened dismay,
While I carefully threaded
My onward way

To the wide front chamber,
My Grandmother's pride,
Where her guests of honor
Oft came to abide.

I tiptoed across its clattering floor,
Its walls and its windows were
A chaos of ruin and nothing more.

In those far-a-way days
When my small feet strayed
Across its threshold, like one arrayed
In some act forbidden,
I backed to the door
Close watching for goblins
I felt must be there.

Precipitate fled, the chills
Down my spine,
The wind in my hair.

In the big front yard
There now is no trace,
Of the flowers whose fragrance
Once filled the place.

The sweet old-fashioned things I loved,
Each side of the walk
That led to the door
Are gone.

But the old stone step
Worn smooth by the feet
That will tread it no more,
Lies just as it lay
In my childhood days
So far away.

The lilacs are gone

And the climbing rose
That festooned the window there,
The sunsets fall with the bright blaze
Of glory rare.

The purple deeps of the twilight lie
As they used to lie on summer nights,
When living forms passed to and fro
In the homey blaze of cheery lights.

Those days are gone

And the forms are gone
Once our love and care;
The spirit of things
That once have been,
Are vanished like empty air.

We shall find our loves
In the Borderland,

It is not so far away;
Its homes yield not
To stain or spot
Of ruin or decay.

A PICTURE

The water laps softly on the beach,
And from my feet a shimmering track
Sparkles and scintillates
Across the Bay in the moonlight.
Back in the dim woods
Are shadowy aisles
Where the crickets are singing,
And now and then a glow worm
Glistens in the path.

There are no lights in the Cottage;
The broad Lake lies silent
Beneath the stars;
The pines nod softly to each other,
For God has descended from His Heaven.

FROM MY WINDOW

Winter rain came pattering down,
It soaked the roofs of the grey old town,
The skies turned a dark and sullen hue,
The air grew a little keener too;
The snow fell light as thistle down,
And whitened the earth so bare and brown;
It flurried about each skeleton tree,
And with every passer-by made free;
It coated each roof in spotless white,
And on each shrub clung fast and tight.

The rifts in the clouds wore a lovely blue,
The air grew a little keener too.
On a silent town in spotless white,
The moon smiled down from her dizzy height.
Through feathery aisles of orchard trees,
Over roofs of patient quiet bees,
On the fences and over the lane,
Out on the meadow's level plain,
The fettered brooklet showing through,
The mountain tops in the distant blue;
All in their snowy dress of white,
And the smiling moon on her dizzy height.

THE LEGEND OF THE CORN

In the golden days of Harvest
When skies are blue and fair,
Beyond the purpling hill tops,
When a chill's in the bracing air.
Among the nodding cornfields
Russet and red and gold,
Autumn, in robes of beauty,
Lingers before the cold.

'Tis said in the old time legend
When the Harvest moon is bright,
Out of the Happy Hunting Grounds
Into the whispering night,
Come the allied Indian forces
In feathered dress of yore,
A spectral, weird procession
To lead the dance once more.

They move in solemn rhythm
And sway with every breeze,
Their lithesome, sinuous motions
The grace of savage ease;
They shake their rustling fringes,
And nod their feathered plumes,
And all their gaudy trappings
The moonlight soft illumes.

And so when the corn is standing
In shocks on the moonlit ground,
And the night wind roams among them
With a mournful, moaning sound,
They come in strange procession
With feathered dress of yore,
And chant some old time melody
As they lead the dance once more.

THE HOUSE ON THE HILL

A House with wings on either side,
Crowning the hill where tall elms sway,
Whose many whispering voices
In soft cadences die away.

Its call goes forth from an open door
As many a call has gone before;
The maimed, the lame, the ill and blind,
Like weary pilgrims come to find
A surcease from their haunting pain —
The boon of life and health again.
Of such was I. Through its open door
I passed, as many had done before,
Weary and ill in body and soul,
A suppliant praying to be made whole.

At shut of even in the semi gloom,
An Angel passed from room to room;
Her touch brought hope to the heart of the weak,
And the blush of health to many a cheek.
Now and then by some stricken bed
An instant she paused and pitying said,
"You can bear no more. Come home with me,
From this broken body I'll set you free."
The two passed out like a fleeting breath
And this is the Passing that men call Death;

The unseen Nurse who comes each night,
And no man sees when she takes her flight.

Through endless days and nights of pain,
When shadows clouded my weary brain,
She subdued my heart's wild throbbing strife
And quelled the turbulent channels of life.
I saw her not. She spoke no word,
I only knew that my pulses stirred,
And life and health infused again
The broken structure where despair had lain.
The Angel that men call Death is Life;
To some she brings peace from endless strife;
She comes by day and oft by night,
But no man sees when she takes her flight.
She may return at no distant day,
But my work will not unfinished lay,
Since she gave to me to feel once more
The sweet pure air of the open door.

A House with wings on either side,
Crowning the hill where tall elms sway,
Whose many whispering voices
In soft cadences die away.

WINTER CLOUDS

Dark sullen clouds are lifting
Fantastic shapes on high,
In changing masses drifting
Across the wintry sky.
Lifting,
Drifting,
Ever shifting
Across the wind swept sky.

Somewhere the sun is shining —
Must be they've turned to gold,
For the fringes of their lining
Our longing eyes behold;
Shining,
Lining,
Intertwining,
Our watching eyes behold.

With dark days ever coping
Behind the frosted pane,
Our waiting hearts are hoping
'Til Springtime comes again,
Groping,
Coping,
Hoping
'Til Springtime comes again.

LONGING

I stood on the city's pavement,
And looked with dizzy eyes
On the piles of cement and marble
Towering to meet the skies.
I heard the din and clatter;
The clamor and rush and rattle,
Like the tread of a mighty army
And the swelling surge of battle.

And I longed for the quiet country,
The smell of the new mown hay,
The lanes where once we traveled,
That led o'er the hills away.
The farm house back in the meadow,
And the waving fields of grain,
The golden fruit of the orchard
And to feel like a child again.

EARTH'S MISSION

The Earth
Is a great teacher.
 The best results
Are obtained by cultivation;
From the products of her surface
 Man builds his home;
 She yields sustenance
 For his support,
 And warmth for his comfort.
In her cool embrace
Man lays away his dead,
 And she reduces
His bones to dust.
She drinks up the blood of battles,
 And sends therefrom
 The sweet aroma
 Of the wild flowers.

The Earth
Is a great teacher,
 And man may take
A lesson therefrom;
The best results
 To the mind of man,
 Are obtained by cultivation.
 He must be trained
 In the way of good;

He must be taught the inspiration
Of Purity and Truth,
 Lest into his soul creep lust and murder,
 And man become a leper.
Let him take a lesson from the Earth —
 Both are the creation of God,
 And Purity and Truth
 Are His attributes.

ON THE PLAIN

Whispering winds
 Among the pines,
 Sighing sad and low,
Gathering haste
 O'er snowy waste,
 Wailing as they go.

Faring forth
 From the north,
 Bitter, biting cold,
Fiercely beat
 The stinging sleet
 E'er the day is old.

O'er the plain
 A man drew rein
 In the raging storm,
Flickering life
 In feeble strife
 Essaying to be warm.

A shuddering sound
 In fierce rebound;
 A long and curdling wail,
Upon the track
 A coward pack
 Coming through the gale.

Morning fair,
 Sky so clear,
 Sunlight seeks in vain
The hurtling fate;
 The thirst insatiate
 Of the empty, silent plain.

THE WOE OF ST. PIERRE

Long the Southern sunshine glinted
The roofs of St. Pierre,
Mont Pelee's sheltering slopes were tinted
With tropic flowers rare.
Ships came and went, a gala lot,
And men passed to and fro,
And life was bright in this island spot
As anywhere one may go.

But one fatal morn Mont Pelee broke
The vials of his wrath,
To death the sleeping town awoke
In grim destruction's path.
The monster vampire swooping down
Poured out his molten fire,
And of the helpless unwarned town
Made a blackened funeral pyre.

A flood of awful burning death
Rolled out upon the sea;
Ships were engulfed with every breath
From shaking Mont Pelee.
The decks with shriveled men were massed,
The cordage to ashes fell,
And over all a darkness cast,
Like the very depths of Hell.

Storms may beat and gales may blow,
'Til gales shall cease to be;
Ships may come and ships may go
O'er the island studded sea —
The sunlight woos that quiet grave
And vainly thrills the air —
Nor ocean beating wave on wave,
Can waken St. Pierre.

THE MOONLIGHT

THERE are some things
We cannot speak.
When the moonlight lies white
On the frozen ground,
And long shadows
Have their fling,
We may turn low the light
In a warm homey room,
And sit at the window
And think,
And drink
And absorb, but —
There are some things
We cannot speak.

OCTOBER

Month of russet and red and gold,
Shining days just edged with cold;
Purple sunsets and sweet still night;
Skies that are blue and stars that are bright;
Hazy sunlight and golden sheaf;
Mellow apples and falling leaf;
Busy farmers and lowing kine
Out in the rowen meadows fine;
Flocks of fowl in their southward flight;
Furry marauders at work all night.

Whispering winds that wail and sigh
That all things bright are born to die;
Fragrance of dying departing things;
Rustling of red leaves where ivy clings;
The woodman's axe through the forest ringing;
The glad housewife at her first fire singing;
O fair October! in robes divine,
To link the seasons must ever be thine.

WHERE?

WHERE is God?
 Is He hid away
In the dim old aisles
 Where shadows lay?
 What answer gives
 The whispering breeze
 That plays among
 The vibrant trees?

The trilling notes
 Of happy birds?
The lowing of
 Contented herds?
 The dreamy rhythm
 Of yon purling stream?
 The Lake's fair bosom,
 Its waves agleam?

Vale and valley
 And rolling hills?
Woodland slopes
 And shaded rills?
 Grey piles of rock
 Where mosses grow?
 Grand mountain peaks
 White capped with snow?

The heavenly blue
 Of yonder sky?
The fleecy clouds
 Enmassed on high?
 The answer trace
 In sacred scroll,
 A responsive echo
 In the soul.

THE OTTER

When Nature wakes to beauty,
Space thrills with droning bees,
And gentle summer breezes
Play among the trees,
Fishing boats and pleasure launches,
Sailing craft and steamers grand
Gem the bosom of the Otter
Like a scene from fairy land.

Would you quaff the thrilling nectar
From the deeps of Nature's cup?
Take a trip adown the Otter
Ere the busy world is up;
Ere the sun along the valley
Dries the dewy fields of night,
Watch the wild and timid creatures
Coming forth into the light.

Chattering flocks of hungry blackbirds
Settle 'mong the nodding corn,
The eagle soars on lofty pinions
Fearless in the early morn;
Birds unknown and birds familiar,
Blend their notes along the stream —
Glides your boat in raptured silence,
Like the music of a dream.

Looking back on many ages
Otter's waters flow serene,
None of us may know the stages
Or the varied change of scene.
We but guess how long the Red man
Fished upon this quiet water,
When the dense primeval forest
Darkened all the shining Otter.

When the white man's flint lock musket
Sent its first resounding call,
Pioneer axes swung in rhythm
To rear a village at the fall,
Rocks of ages, smooth and polished,
Standing silent, grim and tall,
Breaks the Otter reckless o'er them,
Foaming, thundering at the Fall.

Men of iron will and courage
Wrought far past the eventide,
Ere McDonough's fleet went sailing
Down the Otter's shining tide;
Cut their way around the British
In the darkness of the night,
Where they blocked the river's entrance,
And routed them in flight.

From Widow Story's historic cave
To Fort Cassin's storied shore,
The Otter has been the water way
For men and deeds of yore.

What scenes await the future years
 Adown Time's coming ages
We know not, neither can we guess
 The varied, changing stages.

Men come and go — are laid to rest,
 Not so our storied river,
Unswerving on its steady course
 It flows and flows forever,
Fond memory weaves a golden thread
 Along this shimmering water,
Endearing all its winding way —
 Our peaceful shining Otter.

IN THE TWILIGHT

The sun hangs low in the beautiful west,
And over the earth in her green robes dressed,
Is falling the holy hush of rest
 Like a prayer on the wings of the soul.

The bleating of sheep and the lowing of kine
From the pasture slopes and the woods of pine,
Are stilled by the farmer's thatch and vine
 Where the flocks lie down to rest.

The deep toned bell from the quaint old tower,
Over the village roofs in swelling power
Is tolling forth the matin hour,
 With an answering thrill in each man's
 breast.

The dark woods lie on every side;
The grand hills rear their heads in pride,
In the holy hush of eventide,
 They worship in temples of air.

On the hill, in the valley, the village lies;
Its peaceful spires through the foliage rise
In the ruddy glow of the sunset skies —
 A pastoral picture fair.

My soul bows down in the hush of the hour,
In reverence accepting His deep, subduing
power,
And each trembling leaf and folded flower
Are bowed in worship too.

THE HOMELIGHT

Set the light burning,
Keep the home warm
For the sake of the dear one
Out in the storm.
The world is a battle field,
They who earn bread
Must wrest it by toil
With hands or with head.

Set it burning, my dear,
Let its radiance shine,
Make the home homelike,
Thy task is divine.
The smile of good cheer,
The soft word of praise,
The neatly clad housewife,
The small thrifty ways,

Make the home beautiful
And keep the hearth warm,
For some one who's toiling
Out in the storm.
Set the light burning,
Thy task is divine,
Over thine own life
Its halo will shine.

A PRAYER

O God,
Teach me
To take mine inheritance.
To reach out
And accept
From Thy hand,
All
Thou hast intended
For me.

O God,
Teach me
From this full measure,
To mete out
To others
Who, courage lost,
Are
Blindly groping
For Thee.

IN THE DARK

I LAY in the dark
And watched the lights of the town,
Between them and my open window
Great trees swayed gently in the wind,
They made a moving fret-work
Of leaves
On the wall,
And the white hangings
Of my bed.

My eyes flew wide open
At the strangeness
Of the thing.
As they advanced
And receded,
I lay and watched them
In the dark.

DISAPPOINTMENT

We made a pact,
You and I,
The sun shone
And it transfigured our path.
We came to the forks of the road,
You said this way,
I said that,
And tho we came this way,
I still think it is wrong,
For it leads thru a land
Where there is no sunshine.

I love the sunshine —
And the cup you gave me to drink —
What was in it?
The lees are bitter, bitter,
And there is a taste of ashes
In my mouth.

ON THE CLIFFS

We sat on the cliffs at sunset
And gazed o'er the lake so fair,
With never a breeze disturbing
The silent evening air.

The sky was clothed in splendor,
In hues of pink and blue,
And the water blushed in answer,
A beautiful roseate hue.

Dark cedars stood like sentinels
Along the rock bound shore,
And down in the clear still water
We saw them reflected o'er.

The hills rose far in the distance
And fair green isles we saw,
An enchanted panorama —
A picture without a flaw.

Then slowly the bright hues faded,
The light went out of the west,
The night and its sad sweet voices
Folded the place in rest.

LOVE

She thrills the soft breeze of the morning,
That stirs like a whisper, the trees,
And the gold that embays the bright petals,
When flowerets unfold to the sun.
All the shadowy places are shining
With a wonderlight fair to behold;
The glare of the noontide is softened,
That lies on the meadow's rare bloom,
And I float as a gossamer bubble
Down the wane of the afternoon.

When evening shuts down like a mantle,
And wraps me in softest repose,
She comes like the down of the thistle
And twines in my hair the red rose.

VERSE

It may be a song, a fragment of prayer;
A quaver of bird carol in the air;
A whisper of leaves in a maple's shade;
A glint of sunshine across a glade;
The ripple and purl of dappling streams;
The hazy memory of happy dreams;
A dewy rose on a summer morn;
The hush of nature where love is born.

A woodland path that once you knew,
Where anemone and violet grew;
The perfume wafted from a flower;
A bit of comfort in sorrow's hour —
These are the things for a poet planned,
Couched in a language men understand.

HOW THE WEST BEGAN

From the sunrise land of a thousand hills;
From the lure of rivers, lakes and rills;
From the farms along New England's waters,
Went forth her sturdy sons and daughters,
That's how the West began.

Across prairies drear and lonely,
Each dragging day a few miles only,
Belongings packed in a wagon van —
That's how the West began.

New England's men and women too,
The ones who went to dare and do,
Thru sweat and toil and often tears,
They were the Western pioneers —
That's how the West began.

A little shack on the rolling plain,
The stress of toil, the sting of pain,
The pluck and vim of the Eastern man —
That's how the West began.

NOR YET ALONE

I DWELL among dear familiar things,
Your gifts and mine;
Souvenirs of happy days;
Keepsakes from those now dead;
Things brought from lands and climes
Where our varied journeyings led.

Now you have gone
And left me here alone.
Yet not alone. Among fond memories
I dwell in sweet content;
The happy voices of children dear,
Their songs and laughter,
Plaints and woes
Again I seem to hear.

Oft I pass from room to room
Where their belongings are;
I touch them lovingly and think
How they are doing things
Out in the world afar;
Their letters come, a welcome break
From books galore, and dreams,
And work so light and varied
It but a pastime seems.

When I too pass out
There will be none to live
Among the things you left.
Returning feet of wandering ones
May echo here once more;
Or maybe loneliness will creep
Into the empty rooms,
And no footprints will disturb
The dust upon the floor.

I love the room
That once was yours,
Its window toward the town;
I bring my work to linger here
In the stillness sweet,
You seem so very near.
Fond memories are mine
With dreams and books galore;
Content and peace
And letters dear,
How could I ask for more?

WHEN I WOULD GO

When the summer breeze is soft and light
Before the coming of the night;
When the sunset lures me home to rest
With my windows open toward the west.
When the flowers fold their leaves to sleep
And twilight shadows softly creep,
And softly trail from sifting wings
A dimness o'er familiar things;

Through the gathering dusk of coming night
My soul would wing its outward flight,
For me, dear children, do not weep,
But all the loving memories keep
Of days gone by and days unborn;
Fill well the places you adorn.

GOD'S SMILE

The dismal rain was falling
From out a leaden sky,
And mournful winds were calling
To waters rolling high.

But when the rain clouds lifted
And showed the rifts of blue,
My heart grew lighter, lighter,
God's smile was shining through,
It touched the sodden landscape
And all the trembling leaves,
'Til they shone in dewy splendor —
A fretwork of spangled weaves.

It kissed the pulsing waters
And broadened o'er the plain,
Refulgent on the mountain tops
Its glory shone again.
My heart grew lighter, lighter,
As I opened its sombrous door,
And glory filled a sanctum
Where shadows lay before.

OUR NAME

You have heard them tell, O children!
In the misty long ago,
How our fathers struck for Freedom
A strong decisive blow;
How they seized a rusty musket;
In the furrow left the plow;
Hunger bore and grinding hardship
With the death damp on their brow.

'Tis a thing we should remember
Traced on History's solemn page,
Why our hero, Ethan Allen,
In that dim and distant age,
Named our fair and ancient city
For a man in sunny France;
For the old Green Mountain heroes
Never did a thing by chance.

Count De Vergennes, our namesake,
Made the history of this land.
For our fathers, struggling handful,
He made firm and loyal stand.
He detained the pressing orders
The King of France detailed;
Refusing to help the Colonies
'Til all Louis' ships had sailed.

The King decreed that Franklin
Should not enter Paris gate,
But the same friend, ever watchful,
Saw the message came too late.
That he stood in staunchest friendship
By our sainted Franklin's side,
Is an all sufficient reason
For an homage true and wide.

Vergennes gave us Count De Rochambeau,
With his brave twelve thousand strong,
Holding back King George of England,
Helping right a grievous wrong.
Through him America received
Its beloved Lafayette,
Whose effective aid to Washington
We never shall forget.

And this is why, O children!
That this favored spot of earth,
With its cloud capped mountain setting
And its shining river girth,
Caught the soul of Ethan Allen
With a name he cherished dear;
On your memory deep inscribe it;
Count De Vergennes, or Charles Gravier.

WHY WE LOVE VERGENNES

A Rebel Patriot paused one day
Beside yon cataract's foaming spray.
A few small houses stood beside
The river's swift and turbid tide;
A few small houses and that was all,
Clustered for safety about the Fall.
What was it he saw that his pulses fired?
What was it he felt that his soul inspired?
In the wilderness lay this sunlit glade,
A hallowed spot by Nature made;
A little spot where the trees were felled,
But Ethan Allen in vision beheld
A busy city beside the Fall,
And obeying at once the insistent call,
He secured a charter to hold forever
This charming spot beside the river.
That's why we love Vergennes.

May it bring to us a thought of cheer,
It was not because of the numbers here;
The heritage that is handed down
To us, who live in this quaint old town,
Is mightier far than the millions made
In the sweating toil of the shops of trade.
The beaten way our fathers trod
Lay close to Nature and Nature's God;
The quiet homes and the simple life;
The absence of turmoil, crime and strife;

The ready sympathy and right good will;
Each man and woman with a place to fill,
That's why we love Vergennes.

The song birds flit among our trees,
Their glad notes mingle with the breeze;
A little earlier they come
To make with us their summer home.
The wild flowers bloom not far away
Where meadows spread their green array;
The woods and hills enclose us round;
The mountain peaks our vision bound,
And gorgeous sunsets down the west
Herald the night's approaching rest,
When peace and quiet settle down
Like a benediction o'er the town.
That's why we love Vergennes.

The Sabbath is a little holier here,
Its bells ring out in cadence clear,
Thé pave is worn with passing feet
As they call and call with a meaning sweet.
The song of praise; the hush of prayer;
The belief in a Heavenly Father's care,
Form a tie of brotherhood true and tried.
And all men worship side by side.
Each man's better self awakes
When the Sabbath stillness o'er us breaks.
That's why we love Vergennes.

Among the friends we cherish dear,
Some go out each passing year;
On the hillside green they sweetly rest,
The peace of God on each still breast.
A mound of earth; a gift of flowers;
Each hallowed dead, they still are ours;
Inert and silent, tho they lie,
They bind us with another tie.
That's why we love Vergennes.

The dearest spot in all the earth
Is the goodly land that gave us birth.
The charm of home has a strong appeal;
It binds the heart with bands of steel,
And if we go out to criticise
Some loiterer waits to put us wise;
We easily find the things we seek;
Some spot in our brother's armor weak.
This was not in the vision the Patriot saw,
But a city of homes without a flaw;
The ready sympathy and right good will;
Each man and woman with a place to fill,
And, friends, " it is up to you and me "
To make this place what it ought to be.
That's why we love Vergennes.

Read at Old Home Week celebration July second, nineteen hundred sixteen.

BELLS

One Sabbath eve at leisure sweet,
Through a village street I strolled,
While the bells from the neighboring churches
For evening service tolled.
Sweetly the chimes were calling
The people forth to pray,
And the shades of night were falling
That lovely autumn day.

The matin bells are ringing
Through the shades of the soft twilight,
Sweet old time memories bringing
Home to my heart to-night.
My pulses thrill as I listen,
I love their music so;
They carry me back to other days,
And the bells of long ago.

LAYING THE CORNER STONE

We have gathered in the sunshine
'Neath the blue September sky,
With yon cloud-capped mountain setting
And the river rolling by;
And perchance there are some in Heaven
Who once this place have known,
Who would like to bend and listen
As we lay this corner stone.

Fit spot for a temple of knowledge
On this beautiful sloping lawn,
With its great trees whispering overhead
And its entrance facing the dawn,
Where many feet may go in and out;
The weary, the sated and old,
And eager boys and girls who seek
For the aid its shelves will hold.

And when the hues of sunset
Entranced the senses hold,
And all its western windows
Shine out like burnished gold,
When evening shadows stealing
And stars in the heaven shine,
And man for a hand of guiding
Comes in touch with the Divine,

It is then we may remember
This pleasant place of rest,
And find the thoughts of other men
Whose feet the way have pressed;
Who have struggled with the problems
We are daily called to meet;
They have traced the opening chapters —
We may the book complete.

And shall we not gladly cherish
A memory true and fond,
Of one who has crossed the portal
To the unknown world beyond?
'Tis a privilege and a duty
To honor his name to-day,
Whose generous gift enables us
This corner stone to lay.

His thought went out to benefit
The people he lived among,
And tho so few of them understood,
Warm in his heart it sung;
This quiet one of the blameless life
Who planned for others cheer,
Will continue to live in other lives
With every passing year.

And when the subtle changes come
That over towns will creep,
And when our children's children
In quiet graves do sleep;
This beautiful hall will still be here
A blessing to mankind,
In whose treasures every passer-by
A helpfulness may find.

O, sons and daughters of old Vergennes
And part of a noble state,
Whose bracing air and grand blue hills
Lead up to Heaven's gate;
You are sharers in this benefit —
For you this liberal plan;
May you rise to fill your privilege
And help your fellow man.

When all the wealth and pomp of earth
Like mists have passed away,
When fanes and domes and spires
In dust and ashes lay;
The deeds of love from man to man
On Eternity's boundless shore,
In fadeless glory still will shine
As stars forever more.

To-day as we stand on the hillside
'Neath the blue September sky,
Framed in by the western mountains
And the river rolling by;
May we come within the radiance
Around the Great White Throne,
For the faith, the hope and charity,
As we lay this corner stone.

(Read at the laying of the corner stone for the Bixby Memorial Library at Vergennes, September 21, 1911).

A SONG

THERE'S a song in the air,
I can hear the sweet notes,
It's ringing in joy
From hundreds of throats;
It invades the deep quiet
Shut up in my breast,
And now I am longing
To sing with the rest.

THE END

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